DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 214 116 CS 006 532

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TITLE The Social Origins of Comprehension Skills at the Pre-Reading Level.
PUB DATE Mar 82
NOTE 40p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 19-23, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Cognitive Development; *Cognitive Processes; *Concept Formation; Early Experience; Interaction; Listening Comprehension; Preschool Children; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Research; *Student Teacher Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Schemata; *Social Interaction; Story Grammar

ABSTRACT

Working under the hypothesis that a child's concept of a story and his or her concept of the task of narration used to tap comprehension emerge first in social interaction, a methodology was created for studying the process of development from dependent functioning in social interaction to independent functioning based on L. Vygotsky's theoretical perspective--that the child first acts out the appropriate behaviors necessary to complete a task under someone else's guidance. The development of comprehension skills in the preschool children was investigated through two kinds of teacher-child interactions: (1) children individually narrating a story to the researcher, and (2) children dramatizing the story in small groups. Four case studies illustrated how the social interaction within and around the stories as guided by the teacher over time contained the blueprint for each child's mental construction of thought processes. It was concluded that if children develop story schemas or scripts for memory and comprehension of texts and text-like material, then these mental processes are being constructed in the dialogues and social interactions involving stories with significant people in their lives during the preschool years. (Appended are transcripts of the teacher-child interactions.) (HOD)

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The Social Origins of Comprehension Skills at the Pre-Reading Level*

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I. Overview

Asking children to give a narrative account of what they have heard or read has become an important educational and research tool for assessing reading comprehension. Children's narrative reports are used in Betts' (1946) informal reading inventory, Durell's (1955) analysis of reading difficulties, and Goodman's Reading Miscue Inventory (1973). Researchers such as Rumelhart (1975) Mandler and Johnson (1977), Stein and Glenn (1977), Brown and Smiley (1977), Meyer (1977), Reder (1980), Newman, Dowley and Pratt (1978) have used narrative recall of stories as the basis for studying text-processing and prose comprehension. Much of the current work on memory for and comprehension of stories has been inspired by the seminal research of F. Bartlett (1932). His studies of people's recall for stories demonstrated that human memory is guided by "schemas" - a person's active organized network of past experience. He showed that an analysis of narrative protocols can provide important insights to the process of constructing new knowledge into one's on-going thought processes. The research to be presented here studies the development of narrative skills in the young child in order to understand how comprehension skills develop in the pre-reading child.

*Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Meetings, New York City, March 19-23, 1982.

CS 206532

The research of McNamee (1979, 1980) shows that current explanations of the development of narrative skills start at the point when the young child can give a narrative rendition of a story on his own. At this age, approximately six years, the child may overlook details that an adult might include, such as the motivations for character's behavior, but the narrative usually has a beginning, some reporting of story events, and a conclusion. Researchers have avoided working with children under six because of the need to keep asking them questions in order to elicit any information about a story. Narrative data from a child under six is more aptly described as a conversation between adult listener and child, with the adult listener becoming an active participant in the story telling process. When trying to separate the adult's comments from the child's in an effort to evaluate what the child knows and understands, one is left with meaningless disconnected fragments of a conversation. The adult's role as interrogator leaves us uncertain as to the value of the children's answers: are questions a legitimate resource for the child to make use of in formulating ideas, or are questions an intrusion -- literally putting words in the child's mouth?

The problem of trying to study what a young child knows and understands about a story before he/she can give an independent narrative account of it, reflects a larger problem in Western developmental research. Currently, psychology does not have a theory or methodology for studying how a child arrives at the point of being able to function independently in carrying out such a task except for pointing to general principles of maturation (Schank and Ableson, 1977; Stein, 1978). Children too young to give an independent narrative account are seen as lacking the necessary mental processes and skills, and therefore not within the scope of research goals. Thus, data collection has been limited to the later stages of skill development.

One theory of development which offers an explanation for how the young child attains the level of carrying out a task alone, is that of the Soviet psychologist L.S. Vygotsky. He provides a unique theoretical perspective for analyzing psychological development. He maintains that the development of higher mental processes begins in social interaction. For Vygotsky a young child's cognitive development is intimately linked to social interactions with significant adults in his life. What happens in social interaction between an adult and a child becomes a part of the child's own thought processes. Vygotsky tells us that "it is through others that we develop into ourselves". For Vygotsky social interaction is the cornerstone of the child's development:

> Development does not proceed toward socialization but toward the conversion of social relations into mental functions.
>
> (Wertsch, 1981)

From this theoretical perspective, the process of question-asking by the adult in eliciting stories from young children, or the prompting and comments from peers take on new meaning. No longer a hindrance to research, the input to a child's narrative by adults and peers becomes the main research tool for studying the development of the child's thinking and these sources of input are the means which foster the child's thinking toward independent functioning. For these reasons, this research explores the social origins of narrative skills in the pre-reading child.

The study to be reported describes a methodology for studying the process of development from dependent functioning in social interaction to independent functioning based on Vygotsky's theoretical perspective. The methodology involves examining the dialogues between 3, 4 and 5-year old children, their peers and their teacher in a preschool setting. The main hypothesis being investigated is: a child's concept of a story and his or her concept of the task of narration used to tap comprehension, emerge first in social interaction.

If children develop story schemas or scripts for memory and comprehension of texts and text-like material, then these mental processes are being constructed in the dialogues and social interactions involving stories with significant people in their lives during the preschool years.

II. Theory & Data on Development in Social Interaction

Vygotsky was interested in how the child becomes able to guide and direct his own actions in solving a problem or completing some task. He believes that a child does not become able to solve a problem on his own simply because of age or maturation, but that the skills and processes of thinking acquired to solve a problem are directly related to how the child interacts with adults and peers in specific problem-solving situations. Vygotsky argues that a child arrives at a point where he can complete tasks on his own only because at some point in the past, he received help and guidance from another. The child proceeds from being other-regulated to self-regulated (Wertsch et al., 1978). The child internalizes the kind of help he receives from others and eventually uses the same means of guidance to direct himself.

Vygotsky formulated this most fundamental law of development as follows:

> Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice or on two planes...First, it appears between people as an interpsychological category and then within the child as an intrapsychological catetory. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, to logical memory, to the formation of concepts, and the development of will. (1981)

Thus, on the interpsychological plane of development, the child first "acts out" the appropriate behaviors necessary to complete a task under someone else's guidance. Only later does the child begin to understand the role and significance of the specific behaviors involved in completing a task and begin to coordinate them on his own on the intrapsychological plane of functioning.

Vygotsky's theory leads to a different strategy when studying a child's development. From his perspective, the origins of memory, attention, and speech are found outside the child, in the help given by adults and older children. It is this external and observable guidance -- the use of speech and actions -- that must be observed for evidence of how help from others provides the foundation for an individual's monitoring and directing his own actions.

Vygotsky did not specify in great details what kinds of social interactions would foster a child's development toward independent functioning nor did he describe what transpires in any one social interaction that leads to a child's growth. There are several forms of adult-child interaction that one might think of as a teaching-learning situation, for example, interactions such as demonstrations or didactic teaching on the part of the adult. There is another less direct and less conscious way that adults teach children in a social situation and that is in the day-to-day encounters where the adult and child work on a task together. The research of Wertsch et al. (1978, 1980) studying white middle class mothers with their 2-1/2- to 4-1/2-year-old children in a puzzle-making task, and Ninio and Bruner's (1978) case study of a white middle class mother and her son in book-reading interactions over a sixteen-month period, examine this more common daily occurrence of adults "teaching" children.

When thinking about the task of narrating a story it becomes clear that it is not something that we learn through direct teaching. A child does not receive such directions as these: (a) think of what the story is about, (b) think of the characters in the story, (c) think about their goals and motives, (d) reconstruct story events in line with people's goals and motives, (e) talk about the events in your own words and do not worry about remembering every last detail verbatim. Yet we all can think of times when adults say to children,

"What did you do in school today?" or "What did you see at the movies?" or "What was the story about that you watched on TV last night?" When our first question does not elicit very much we might say, "Well, who was in the story?" "What happened?" "Where did she go?" Implicitly, our questions demonstrate those we would ask ourselves if we were trying to recount a set of events. Thus, others "teach" children in this less conscious way as they help them through the narration task with spontaneous questions.

In light of Vygotsky's theory, we can say that children learn how to tell stories as they give narrative accounts of events in dialogue with other people. The social interaction comes first, Only then can they understand the task and carry it out on their own. The research discussed here explores how children learn to narrate stories and develop a concept of story as a result of telling stories over and over again with adults and peers in specific story-telling interactions.

A critical concept in Vygotsky's theory that accounts for the development of a child's mental processes from the interpsychological plane of functioning to the intrapsychological plane is the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development specifies two levels of development: a child's actual level and a child's potential level. The actual level of development consists of those mental processes that have matured to the point of being regulated by one's own means. This level is manifested in those situations where a child can function independently of another's direction. The potential level of development consists of those processes that are the "buds" or "flowers" of development, manifested as a child solves a problem with the help of an adult or more capable peer. Vygotsky called this second level the potential developmental level because one can assess those mental processes that are just in the process of unfolding, those that

are not completely matured, by observing the extent to which a child can make use of help offered by another in a problem-solving situation. The "zone" constitutes the difference between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and a child's potential level of development as determined in problem solving under an adult's guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. The zone defines the area in which a child can learn if he receives help from others.

The zone of proximal development is a unique concept; it provides not only a "retrospective summary" of a child's development but it describes the means by which one can characterize mental development "prospectively". Western psychological and educational research tends to focus on assessing a child's actual level of development by standardized tests and experimental tasks. Such tests estimate what a child can do by himself. Vygotsky provides a framework for studying how a child gets to this point of functioning as an independent agent. From this perspective we can hypothesize that children who can only tell stories with the help of the listener (through questions, promptings) are functioning somewhere in their zone of proximal development (on the interpsychological plane). If they can tell a story without any help, they have arrived at their actual level of development (on the intrapsychological plane) for this particular task.

Using this framework, McNamee (1980) showed that the dialogue between a teacher and individual children contributed to the development of narrative skills over time. The study revealed 3 major findings regarding the transition from dependent to independent functioning: 1) the children needed consistently less help from the adult listener with their narratives over time (4 weeks); 2) not only did the amount of help they needed change, but the kind of help they needed changed. The children were gradually able to make use of more

open-ended kinds of questions (e.g., What happened then?) rather than specific question types (e.g., "What did the father do when his daughter said 'no'?"); and 3) when narrating a new but similar story during the fourth week, the children demonstrated that they could transfer some of their narrative skills to another situation. The findings pointed out that the transition from dependent to independent functioning is not simply a matter of receiving less and less help over time but is a process where the amount and kind of help a child needs over time can vary.

In the classroom where data collection of the McNamee (1980) study was carried out, narrative recall of stories had become a routine daily activity in conjunction with small group dramatizations of stories. In dramatizing stories, each child would take the role of a character and act out its part while saying that character's lines. Even with stories that the children were familiar with, such as "The Three Pigs", the children had trouble at times remembering certain parts of the story, remembering what came next, and remembering the words that went with their part. Here, too, the teacher played a central role in directing the action of the story dramatizations. The teacher began asking the children to narrate stories individually, to give them time to think about the story, about each character's part in it, and how the parts fit together.

This set of story activities, using the wealth of good literature available to young children, was complemented by a parallel set of on-going story activities using the children's own stories. Over the course of the year children were encouraged to dictate stories that they made up to a teacher, who would write them down. In response to one child's request, the step of dramatizing these stories was added as a regular classroom activity. When the dramatization of the children's own stories began, a flurry of

story writing ensued. It seemed that, from the child's point of view, dramatization was the most compelling reason to dictate stories and listen to new stories. They adored this activity! (A full description of this classroom and these activities is provided by the head teacher, Vivian Paley, in her book, Wally's Stories, Harvard University Press, 1981.)

At the time of the McNamee (1980) study, it was clear that the activity of dramatizing different kinds of stories was contributing as much to the development of narrative schemas as were the one-on-one dialogues in which children individually narrated the story to a teacher. It was also clear that the one-on-one interaction of a child dictating a story to the teacher -- who then wrote down e child's words -- was teaching the child a great deal about the process of writing. Sometines a child would tell a story so quickly the teacher would have to ask the child to slow down so that her writing could keep pace with the child's narration. Children gradually become aware that each word they uttered was being represented by a series of letters; with repeated usage, some words and letters became familiar to the children. The writing down of the story also forced the child to monitor the logical necessity of one idea following another. For example, one child told the following story:

A little girl found a flower.

She picked it.

Then she went home.

The frog jumped into the pond.

The teacher asked the child where the frog was and why it jumped into the pond. The child said that the girl walked by the pond on her way home and scared the frog. The teacher was then able to add the sentence "She walked by a pond and scared a frog", between the last two sentences.

The children's commitment to the activity of story telling when the teacher provided time for dramatizing it, points to another aspect of the social origins of comprehension skills. It was as if the children themselves were giving affirmation to Vygotsky's theory (1962) that "the primary function of speech, in both children and adults, is communication-social contact. The earliest speech of the child is therefore essentially social."(p.19) The children recognized and embraced these activities as a means of expressing themselves to the adults and peers they worked with everyday. Their stories tell of their wishes, what life is like, what it ought to be like, they mark special occasions (e.g. a Chinese New Year Story), they are used to welcome a friend back to school, to work on an out-of-school anxiety, they help the child try out a new idea. The activities themselves require dialogue and interaction with adults and peers to carry them out and the purpose of the activity for the child - the story material generated, is basically a social communication. They become a format for adults and peers to enter into the child's world - his ideas, wishes fantasy and see the world through his or her eyes - literally through the child's script. It becomes the childrens's way of telling those around them how they think at the same time they are trying to figure out in fact what they do think. This process of having dialogues with others about what they think is the process that is building the internal mental process to think about such problems in the future.

For Vygotsky, thinking is fundamentally dialogic in nature:

> ...the sign (words, gestures, picture) initially is a means of social interaction and only later becomes a means of behavior for the individual... In general, we could say that the relations among higher mental functions were at some earlier time actual relations among people. I shall relate to people as people relate to me... The word's first function is its' social function, and if we want to trace how it functions in the behavior of an individual, we must consider how it is used to function in social behavior... Relations among mental functions genetically must be linked to the real relations among people. Regulations of other's behavior by means of the word gradually leads to the development of verbalized behavior of the people themselves. (1981, p. 158-159)

A close look at several children's stories will illustrate how these activities of story telling and dramatization fulfill both the adult's need to be providing the pre-reading child with a firm foundation in language (vocabulary, letters, sounds: oral and written) and literature while fulfilling the child's need to develop the means to express him/herself more effectively in order to be understood.

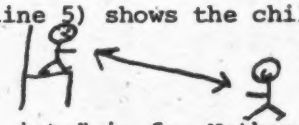
Transcripts of stories told by 4 children in V. Paley's classroom one morning this past January appear in Appendix A. The dictation of the stories and their dramatization are included to provide a picture of the two aspects of the activity. The children have free choice activity time for the first part of the morning during which time the teacher is available for writing down the children's stories. Halfway through the morning, the children come together as a group to sing a song, have announcements and discussions, and to dramatize the stories written that morning. The children and teacher sit in a circle, the center of which is their stage. Sometimes the children have specified classmates who they wish to play a designated role in their story. If they haven't, the teacher calls on the children from the edge of the circle one after another to play roles. The teacher is the scribe in the story dictation process, and director and narrator of the dramatizations.

In the first interaction, Nathaniel, a 3-year old, tells the teacher a story that he has heard at home: "The Fox and the Crow". His telling of the story seems quite sophisticated for his age:

> Once there was a crow and he had a tasty piece of cheese in his mouth. The fox came and then the crow opened his mouth and the cheese fell in the fox's mouth. The fox jumped and ran with the cheese.

He begins by telling the teacher that his story only has 2 characters in it. This reflects the child's having internalized the way the teacher has commented on "the characters" in children's stories over the past 4 months in many different contexts. The child can now use this concept to organize his narrative of a simple story. Lines 5, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 19 provide a detailed picture of the teacher's

role as scribe and how the child potentially benefits from watching and participating in the process of transposing his spoken words into writing. The teacher says each phrase and word as she writes it down and then repeats the story told so far when she feels the child needs to hear the whole text for continuity (line 23).

Lines 37 to 41 illustrate how the teacher can work on concept building and language development with the children in the context of stories. The teacher asks Nathaniel what a crow is so that Michael will know why he is in a tree and will know how to act. If he and the other children do not know what a crow is Nathaniel's story and Michael's behavior will be meaningless. The necessity of words making sense in a story in order for it to be understood is further illustrated in lines 47, 49 and 51. The sequence of words and actions described become meaningful to the extent that they can be translated into a logical sequence of physical behaviors. The teacher helps the children experience the meaning of a sequence of events in every detail of their gestures. In this story dramatization, Michael stood on a chair to represent the crow in the tree eating cheese. Nathaniel, the fox, entered the story but stood about 3 feet away from the crow in the tree waiting for the cheese to drop. The teacher (in line 5) shows the children that the cheese would not "fall into the fox's mouth"  if the child stands so far away. The only way it can "fall into" is for Nathaniel to stand under Michael:
Thus the children experience the precise meaning of words and the logical necessity of one event following the other. They experience it behaviorally and in relation to other people before they experience these meanings mentally from words alone as adults can. The teacher feels that such a well constructed story with ideas that can be clearly experienced is worth repeating and so she gives other children the opportunity to enact thses ideas (lines 55-64).

Lines 25 to 30 in Nathaniels's dictation of the story reflect an interesting phenomenon to observe at the ages of 3 and 4. The teacher asks the child if he wants to draw a picture to go with his story after it is written and he responds enthusiastically. His picture turns out to be unrelated to his story. Combining 2 levels of representation - words and pictures toward one common end, the telling of a story or an idea, is not something the child can control yet. The child's mind does not yet hold the ideas of the story and then plan his activity in relation to it. At this age as Vygotsky (1962) noted: "a small child draws first and then decides what it is that he has drawn; at a slightly older age, he names his drawing when it is halfdone; and finally he decides beforehand what he will draw." (p.17) A contrast to Nathaniel's retelling of the fox and the crow story is one of his own original stories that has a piece of spaghetti in it (as the class has come to recognize - see line 56). This story has a structure more common to 3-year olds and a line of thinking comparable to his picture drawing. lines 66 to 100 present the dramatization of an original story told several days after the fox and the crow story. The story is as follows:

Once there was a zoo.

A lion came and eated it up.

Then the gorilla came and spanked him.

Then came Superman.

Then Spiderman came.

Then Batman came.

Then a piece of spaghetti came.

Then a piece of pizza came.

Then came a giant house.

Then a tree came.

Then a pencil came.

Then a huge person came.

This story unfolds with a series of free associations that have no particular relationship to one another. The story takes shape as he's telling it and as he thinks of something else right on the spot. The child comes to the teacher with the urge to tell a story - to express something but does not necessarily have an idea of what the story is going to be about or an idea to guide the relating of one event to the next. This kind of story telling reflects the most primitive level of story structure noted by Applebee (1978).

Applebee used Vygotsky's (1962) stages of concept development to describe the stages that young children's stories pass through as their concept of story structure develops. He described the stages as follows (p. 57-67):

1. Heaps -- stories represent syncretistic organization of essentially unrelated elements; there is a conceptual "whole" organized by the linking of immediate perceptions.

2. Sequences -- stories contain concrete factual bonds between events. There is an arbitrary and superficial sequence in time. Association between events are based on their similarity rather than on casuality.

3. Primitive Narratives -- stories have a concrete core (an object or event) rather than a conceptual one around which the child gathers other related concrete events.

4. Unfocused Chains -- at this state incidents in a story lead directly from one to the next but the attributes which connect them keep shifting. The child can manage a lot of story material but the story lacks a "central point" to which all the parts can be related back.

5. Focused Chains -- stories have a central point which is concrete rather than conceptual. Events are linked around one central concrete attribute.

6. Narratives -- the incidents in a story are tied to a concrete perceptual or abstract core. Stories have a theme or moral; incidents develop out of the previous one and elaborate a new aspect of the theme or situation.

From Applebee's categories we can see that Nathaniel's fox and crow story is easily a Stage 5 story: a focused chain of events linked around one central concrete event, and his spaghetti story is a Stage 1 story: a heap of essentially unrelated elements. It must be noted that the value and enjoyment of Stage 1

stories for the child and the group can be as high as a Stage 5 or 6 story. Nathaniel's spaghetti stories are slapstick comedies for the 3 and 4 year olds which they love to act out.

Nathaniel is a child with great imagination, energy and a passion for experimenting and repeating an activity over and over again until he grasps the idea. During the fall when he went outdoors to the playground he would run to the jungle gym, climb on the first rung, jump off, run away, run back, climb on the first rung, jump off... over and over again, day after day, and then one day he went up to the second rung. He is one child who tells stories every single day and uses them as almost daily exercises in practicing an idea and trying out a slightly different angle to the plot each time. He has now retold his fox and crow story with several variations in the ending as well as telling his own spaghetti and monster stories with variations. He is a compulsive, hard working, determined child who works and works at something until he gets it. He is struggling (at his own choosing!) to figure out what a story is and how to make something happen in his stories but he cannot yet generate a story plot.

Peter is a four year old for whom story writing serves a very different function than it does for Nathaniel. He is a bit more mature in his concept of story (as well as being a year older). He does not tell stories very often but when does, they reflect a clear memory that has come to mind, or a recent experience that he wants to relate to others. His stories take a clear, simple form as the one presented in lines 106-122:

> One time there was a boy that had a great uncle and a great aunt named Uncle Billy and Aunt Sandra. Now Aunt Sandra has a baby in her tummy. And then when it it was morning time, I went into Aunt Sandra's and Uncle Billy's and hopped into their bed.

This child's developmental history will show fewer overt efforts at working on a concept of story as Nathaniel's history will show, but also, this child is not

bothered by the same needs, desires and confusions about storytelling as Nathaniel.

Arthur, five years old is a full 2 years older than Nathaniel, but he too has a style of learning where he repeats an activity or a theme insistently until he masters it. Arthur has a clear concept of what a story is but he was stuck on a particular feeling that he used story telling to express. He has been telling stories about a kitty cat who was intimidated by a monster for several weeks. Arthur always chose to play the part of the kitty cat. His story presented in lines 152-166 shows a breakthrough that he could share with teacher and later on with the class:

> A monster came. Then the kitty cat came. The kitty cat scratched the monster up. Then the kitty cat ran in the house.

In this instance the child used the daily story telling opportunity to give voice to the internal struggle he was going through as represented by the cat continually being overpowered by a monster. Finally, he felt strong enough to stand up to the monster, and this internal growth was witnessed and experienced by his teacher and peers through the previous stories and the present one (see lines 167, 172, 173, 175, 177, 181).

The last story telling and dramatization by Patsy, a four year old, represents another unique case study in the use of story telling for communcating. This story was dictated to the research investigator and not the teacher. I spent several mornings visiting the classroom in order to get to know the children, and I often found Patsy sitting beside me and wanting to talk. She constantly wanted me to pick her up and carry her around. I told her that she was too heavy and that I particularly wanted to sit at the story table and listen to children's stories that they were telling the teacher. She sat on my lap and listened with me for awhile and then I said "I want to tell you a story." I told her I would like to hear it and that I would write it down just as the teacher would. Lines 182 to 218 are a record of her dictation and my part as scribe.

Patsy has only written 3 stories in nursery school so far (as opposed to every other child who has written a dozen or more). She wrote 2 in October with che assistant teacher and one with the head teacher in November when there was no other teacher around and she felt a great need to acknowledge a scarey event that had just taken place in the city; a man climbed up the side of the John Hancock building (Patsy lives in a tall building near the John Hancock building). Her story on that occasion reads:

Somebody's climbing on the bridge.

It's the Billy Goats Gruff.

Spiderman is climbing the John Hancock.

The teacher explained that Patsy tends to avoid her and does not seek attention from the teachers. She is the 6th child in a family of 9 children. Her parents are very energetic and involved with the children; Patsy's mother brings her to and from school each day and there is, as can be imagined, always a great deal of hurrying and directing that the mother has to do to get the children to school and home at different times. Patsy is withdrawn from the teachers and sometimes from the rest of the class. She seems to be going through a temporary loss of footing in her world with the arrival of a new baby in the family last Fall, followed by the move to a new house, and the often confusing logistics of getting to and from school. The teacher senses that the child sees her as someone like her mother: a woman who takes care of a large number of children, is always making plans for the group, directing activities, organizing the day. She showed that she felt needy of maternal attention when she approached me - a woman without responsibilities or connections to this group of children. When I expressed my interest in stories to her, she realized that this was an activity where she would get my complete individual attention and thus her storytelling functioned primarily as a means of getting emotional contact with an adult.

The story that she told was immature for her age; it is distracted, discontinuous and a stream of consciousness:

> A big bad wolf and a man died and there was play dough in there - in the ice cream jar. And there was more play dough coming (We were sitting at the play dough table). It's coming from the ice cream jar toward our house. And all the cheese melted and it was so soggy out with snow on it and there was a typewriter. And there was a muppet show with all muppets.

Patsy's story portrays a sense of her lonliness and sadness to me and later to the group when it is dramatized. The teacher, realizing the importance of the fact that Patsy had told her story to me, therefore asked me to direct its dramatization. The uniqueness of this story is again displayed by the fact that it does not lend itself to being acted out. The 2 characters lay on the floor dead listening to the fragmented images.

Patsy's story points out the significance of the adult who receives the child's story and writes it down for him or her. The adult participating in the story telling and dramatization is not arbitrary and dispensible. The story telling process needs an adult and child involved in an ongoing emotional relationship.

The four case studies discussed illustrate how story telling and dramatization come out of the daily meat and potatoes of living in this classroom. The social context of the story telling and dramatizations become critical to understanding the products produced and shared. The children's needs and motives for wanting to write down a story with someone are intimately tied to the daily life of the group, and researchers need to know that life and context that is the occasion for the story, and is the situation where they learn about oral and written language.

GDM/sp
02/19/82

III. Summary

The research discussed here is exploring the social origins of comprehension skills in preschoolers based on the principles of Vygotsky's theory of development. The social origins refer to the social nature of the child's needs, to the means by which the child learns about symbolic communication systems, and it refers to the logistics of carrying out tasks at the preschool level. It is hypothesized that story schemas which guide the young child's production and comprehension of stories emerge first as a social relationship among an adult, child, and his or her peers. The social interaction within and around stories as guided by the teacher over time contains the blue print for each child's internal mental construction of thought processes.

The aim of future data collection is to document several classrooms of children involved in story telling activities in order to 1) examine the effect of exposure to adult authored stories on the child's developing concept of story; and 2) examine the effect of dramatizing adult authored and child generated stories on a child's developing concept of story. Data collection will be as follows:

CONTROL GROUP		EXPERIMENTAL GROUP	
Public School Setting	Private School Setting	Public School Setting	Private School Setting
Week 1			
* children hear an adult-authored story read twice. * each child narrates the story in dialogue with the researcher.		* Children hear an adult-authored story read twice in small groups. * each small group dramatizes the story. * each child narrates the story in dialogue with the researcher.	
Week 2			
* The researcher will be available to the children for writing down the stories they make up..		* The researcher will be available to the children for writing down stories they make up. * each child's story will be acted out with the child playing any role in the story that he or she chooses, and with other children playing the other roles.	
Week 3			
* The children hear the same adult-authored story as in Week 1 read once. * Each child narrates the story in dialogue with the researcher.		* With the same group of children as in Week 1, the same adult authored story from Week 1 is read once. * Each group acts this story out with each child taking on a new role. * Each child narrates the story in dialogue with the researcher.	
Week 4			
* Same as Week 2		* Same as Week 2	
Week 5			
* Same as Week 3		* Same as Week 3	
Week 6			
* Same as Week 2		* Same as Week 2	

Week 7	
* Children hear a new but similar adult authored story read twice * Each child narrates the story in dialogue with the researcher.	* With the same small group of children as in Weeks 1,3, and 5, a new but similar adult authored story is read twice. * Each small group acts the story out. * Each child narrates the story in dialogue with the researcher.
Week 8	
* Same as Week 2.	* Same as Week 2

The above procedures are designed to answer the following questions:

1. Does the data from the control group confirm the findings of McNamee (1980), who found that children's narratives become more fluent and complex as a result of the story narration dialogues with the researcher?
2. Are the narratives from the experimental group any different from the control group? Does dramatizing the story in small groups have an additional effect on the development of a child's narrative schemas?
3. Do narrative skills acquired while working on the first story transfer to a new story? One might expect that a child's third retelling and dramatization of an adult authored story would be better not only because of the guidance offered by peers and by the adult, but because he or she was more familiar with the story content itself. The second story is included in the procedure in order to assess if it is the child's familiarity with a particular story content alone that accounts for the improvement, or rather, if the child has benefitted from the process of interacting with the adult. If the child has benefitted from the adult's guidance in the first story, then we would expect that he will be able to retell and dramatize the second adult authored story with less help than he needed when retelling

the first story in Week 1.

4. Do the children's self generated stories increase in complexity over time?
5. Are the self generated stories of the children in the experimental group more complex than those of the control group? Does dramatizing the children's own stories in small groups have an additional effect on the development of the child's concept of story (according to Applebee's categories)?
6. What kind of understanding of the writing process do 4 to 6 year olds have as evidenced by their behavior in the dictation process?

The main question to be asked in analyzing the above data to be collected is: Do the children's own stories and their narrative accounts of stories written by adults, become more complex as a result of the help offered by the adult and by fellow peers? The best indication of the effectiveness of the help offered will be reflected in the complexity of their subsequent stories and narratives, and in the degree to which the children produce more with less help from others. The underlying issue is: Does interaction with an adult and/or with one's peers lead to a richer understanding of stories and more complex thinking as relected in the children's own stories?

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Appendix A

	Teacher	Child
Nathaniel's Story (3 years old)	1. All right, Nathaniel, you're telling a story about the fox and the crow:	
		2. Yeah. There's only 2 characters in it.
	3. The Fox and the crow and Nathaniel says there's only 2 characters in it.	
		4. Once there was a crow and he had a tasty piece of cheese in his mouth.
	5. Once* - there was a crow - and he had - a tasty piece - of - cheese - in - his - mouth.	
		6. I know _____ be the fox.
	7. You want to be the fox, all right. You may. Look what I'll do, Nathaniel. I'll put your name right by the fox. Nathaniel is the fox. Who would you like to be the crow? (3" pause)	
		8. If if the fox were the _____ _____ _____ and he jumped around with the cheese. (5" pause)
	9. I didn't get all of that. Once there was a crow and he had a tasty piece of cheese in his mouth. Now.	
		10. and then the fox came - he... and he...
	11. Okay, wait, we'll do it slowly. Then -	
		12. um...yeah
	13. the fox...	
		14. and...
	15. came...	
		16. and then, the, and then the crow opened his mouth and, and the cheese fell into, in the fox's mouth.
	17. Okay, now wait. Stop for one moment. And then the crow - opened his mouth and - the cheese - fell in - the fox's - mouth.	
		18. And the fox jumped around with the cheese.
	19. The fox - jumped - and ran - with -	
		20. a...

*Dashes after a word in the teacher's utterances indicate a small pause as she writes down that word or phrase.

Teacher	Child
21. the cheese. Is this story from a book at home?	
	22. Yeah. I...was in a...at home.
23. Okay, I'll read it all to you now. Once there was a crow and he had a tasty piece of cheese in his mouth. Then the fox came and then the crow opened his mouth and the cheese fell in the fox's mouth. The fox jumped and ran with the cheese (5" pause). Are you finished?	
	24. Yeah.
25. Do you want to draw a picture on your story?	
	26. Yes.
27. (Teacher gives child her pen. N. scribbles around and around in a circle.) Shall I say what this picture is?	
	28. Yes.
29. What is it?	
	30. It's a picture of a Christmas tree.

Dramatization of Nathaniel's story

Teacher	Children
31. In Nathaniel's story, Nathaniel is the fox.	
	32. Nathaniel: No, the _____ come, I come after the crow.
33. All right. Michael, would you be the crow?	
	34. Michael: uh uh, I want to be the...
35. No, it's his story. He chooses,	
	36. Michael: Okay, I'm the crow.

Teacher	Children
37. Yes. Now, you can be up there on the blue chair because you're to be in a tree. And the fox, you will see, comes underneath. Okay. "Once there was a crow..." Do you know what a crow is? Nathaniel, what is a crow?	
	38. Nathanial: A thing that flies.
39. What is it that flies? What do we call it?	
	40. Nathaniel: A crow.
41. It's a kind of bird.	
	42. Robert: You know what?
43. What, Robert?	
	44. Robert: My daddy has a rubber crow at his office and guns.
45. Yeah? Oh really?	
46. "Once there was a crow and he had a tasty piece of cheese in his mouth." (Pause).	
47. There, wasn't that nice the way Robert did that? He showed you he's picking up the cheese.	
48. "Then the fox came." (pause)	(Nathaniel stomps over to the chair)
49. And the crow opened his mouth, and the chee..." Open your mouth.	
50. "...and the cheese fell in the fox's mouth."	
51. Put your mouth under his so that it will fall in. Nathaniel look. If I were doing it, I would...no no, you stand up. I would put my mouth like this: (she demonstrates) so the cheese falls from his mouth into my mouth. Okay? You do that. There. Now.	

Teacher	Child
52. "The fox came and the crow opened his mouth and the cheese fell in the fox's mouth."	
53. There, now we got it!	
54. "The fox jumped and ran with the cheese."	
55. Okay, that's such a good one, let's do that again. No, no, Robert, not with you. Karen, you be the crow up on the tree, and Karla, you be the fox.	
56. By the way, this story is not one that Nathaniel made up by himself, but it is a story that he got from home in a book. He did a good job of telling me the story this morning from memory so that we could act it out. The stories that Nathaniel makes up usually have a piece of spaghetti in them, right Nathaniel? Those are the ones you make up yourself.	
57. Okay. "Once there was a crow. And he had a tasty piece of cheese in his mouth.	
58. (She whispers to Karen): Put the cheese in your mouth. All right.	
59. "Then a fox came."	
60. Now you do the way Nathaniel did and open your mouth so that it's under the crow's mouth.	
61. "And the crow opened his mouth..."	
62. Put your mouth under there... like that.	
63. "...and the cheese fell in the fox's mouth. The fox jumped and ran away with the cheese."	
64. Okay. Very nice. I just wanted Nathaniel to see how it looked when someone else did it. Karen and Karla, you've done your parts well.	

Nathaniel's story
(4 years old)
dramatization

Teacher	Child
66. Nathaniel's story is a little complicated but I think we'll get the point soon enough. Who are you going to be, Nathaniel?	
	67. I'm going to be...I'm going to be the gorilla.
68. Now we're going to use up a lot of people in this story. Um... You can make the sound of the person or animal that you are to be.	
69. Once there was a zoo.	
70. Michael? It's your turn.	
71. A lion came and eated it up.	
	72. Hgh!
73. Then the gorilla came and spanked him. All right.	
	74. Ow!
75. Now here are the following people or things that come. When I point to you, consider that, that's who you are.	
76. Then came Superman.	
77. Good. Okay, we just asked Superman, or you want to be Spiderman?	
	78. No.
	79. I'll be Spiderman.
80. Well, we've already gone beyond you.	
81. Then Spiderman came.	
	82. Spiderman's got webs on his face.
83. Ah, okay.	
	84. Did you know I have a Spiderman suit and a Spiderman web?
85. Now you know Daniel likes everyone to do the part the way it's supposed to be done. How does Spiderman show that he has a web?	
	86. It's a web...

Teacher	Child
	87. It's everywhere.
	88. _____fingers.
89. Ah, so you throw out the web, throw out the web with your fingers. Good.	
90. Then Batman came.	
91. (Shhsh). Okay. Now this becomes a little more difficult.	
92. Caroline - then a piece of spaghetti came.	(laughter)
Then a piece of pizza came.	(lots of laughing)
Adam - then came a giant house.	
93. How can you show us that you're a giant house?	(gestures a roof shape with his arms)
94. Good!	
95. Then a tree came.	(laughing)
96. Good, Natasha.	
97. Then a pencil came.	(laughing)
98. Now, the last one:	
99. Then a huge person came.	(Nathaniel comes into circle)
100. Okay boys and girls. I can tell you enjoyed Nathaniel's story. He writes good stories that get us all laughing!	

Peter's story
(4 years old)

Teacher	Child
101. Peter? Your turn. (Teacher prepares writing paper).	
	102. One time...
103. Wait a minute.	
	104. Is this yours? (tape recorder)
105. No, that's Mrs. McNamee's. One time	
	106. There was a man and his sister and uh, and uh, there was my, my uncle: Uncle Bill and Aunt Sandra...
107. All right wait...	
	108. They're my uncle, my uncle and aunt.
109. Now wait...One time there was a man and his...	
	110. No. One time there was a boy who had some um, um, a great um, aunt and uncle named Uncle Billy and Aunt Sandra.
111. Okay. One time there was a boy that had a great uncle and - great aunt - named	
	112. Uncle Billy and Aunt Sandra.
113. Named - Uncle Billy and - Aunt Sandra	
	114. And one time, and, and, now Aunt Sandra has a baby in her tummy.
115. And now Aunt - Sandra - has - a baby - in - her - tummy.	
	116. And then, when it was morning time,
117. And then when...	
	118. And then...
119. When it was morning time...	
	120. I went into Aunt Sandra's and Uncle Billy and hopped into their bed.

Teacher	Child
121. I was with - Aunt Sandra and Uncle Billy, and I - jumped - into their - into their bed.	
	122. That's all.
123. Okay.	
Dramatization of Peter's story (later that morning)	
124. Peter is talking about people in his family. Once there was a boy.	
	125. They're not my family.
126. No?	
	127. They're the other family.
128. Okay. One time there was a boy.	
129. Peter, are you the boy or Uncle Billy?	
	130. I'm the boy.
131. Well come on. One time there was a boy that had a great uncle and a great aunt named Uncle Billy and Aunt Sara.	
132. Jason, would you be Uncle Billy and Lisa, would you be Aunt Sara?	
	133. Sandra.
134. Sandra, Sandra. Correct.	
	135. Jason: You know what. Once, some time we're going to.. some time we're going to go all the way to Connecticut.
136. Well, we'll do this story right now, though.	
	137. C: Now we go outside?
138. Later, when it's time.	
139. Now Aunt Sandra has a baby in her tummy.	

	Teacher	Child
140.	You could make...look how she's doing, making her tummy real big like a preg-nant lady with a baby. Very good.	
141.	And then when it was morning time...	
142.	Now Aunt Sandra and Uncle Billy pretend you're in bed, because the next sentence has to do with being in bed.	
143.	Then when it was morning time, I was with Aunt Sandra.	
144.		um, at my grand...in my at my grandmother and grand-pa's place.
145.	At my grandma and grandpa's place.	
146.	I'll add that later.	
147.	And I hopped into their bed.	
148.	Very well done. Okay, Peter	

Arthur's Story & Dramatization
(5 years old)

Teacher	Child
149. Arthur, your turn.	
	150. Arthur: Let me see, did that come through (on the carbon paper). Look at that. It comes through. Look at that name.
151. That's "Arthur's Story".	
	152. Look at that. (5" pause) um, um, a monster came (2" pause)
153. A monster came.	
	154. Then the kitty cat came.
155. (3" pause) Then a kitty cat came.	
	156. And then a monster was... the kitty cat scratched the monster up.
157. Oh! This is a new Arthur story you're telling, this is the first time you've ever done that. I like this story. Wait a minute.	
158. Then the kitty cat - scratched -	
159. I like when you put new things in your story.	
160. the monster up -	
	161. And then, and then the kitty cat - ran in the house.
162. Then the kitty - cat - ran - in the - house.	
	163. That's the end.
164. Now. Who are you going to be?	
	165. The kitty cat.
166. Do you remember all the other kitty cat stories? Where the kitty cat runs away from the monster? Remember? And today, the kitty cat scratches the monster up. That's a different story.	

Dramatization

Teacher	Child
167. Arthur's Story. Oh, Arthur did tell a fine story. This is not the usual story that Arthur has been telling. He's surprising us with a new ending.	
168. Would you be the monster? Would you?	(C shakes head no)
169. Jason will be the monster. A monster came.	
170. Okay, come right in the middle. Stand here.	
171. Then a kitty cat came.	
172. Now watch what Arthur does.	
173. What did his kitty cat do in all his other stories? (Pause) Do you remember?	
	174. I remember. He scratch people.
175. Not his kitty cats, no, nope. Not his kitty cats. Uh um, that was in Kate's story.	
	176. I remember. They ran in the house.
177. They ran inside all right. But now listen to what the kitty cat does.	
178. Then the kitty cat scratched the monster up.	
179. Just pretend.	
180. Then the kitty cat ran in the house.	
181. Oh. That's the first time the kitty cat's gotten the best of the monster.	

Patsy's Story
(4 years old)

Teacher	Child
182. Now. Should I put "Patsy's Story" up here? That's what I saw Mrs. Paley doing. So we'll put...here we go (fixing carbon). Now. P-A-T-S-Y. That says Patsy, now I put a little apostrophe s and that means Patsy's Story. Good. (Pause)	
	183. A big bad wolf.
184. A big bad wolf? A - big - bad - wolf.	
	185. um...and a man died.
186. A big bad wolf...what does the...a big bad wolf and a man died? (Pause) A big bad wolf and a man died. Good.	
	187. And there was play dough in there.
188. And there - was - play dough? There was play - dough - in there? In where, Patsy?	
	189. In this story.
190. Oh, and there was play dough in the story. Ah, what happens with the play dough? Now let's listen to this: A big bad wolf and a man died and there was play dough in...	
	191. (Pause) in the ice cream jar.
192. in the ice cream what?	
	193. jar
194. jar? Okay. Ice cream jar. Good.	
	195. And...there was more play dough coming.
196. And there - was - more - play dough - coming. Where was it coming from?	
	197. It's coming from the ice cream jar.

Teacher	Child
198. Oh. Can I put that here? There was more play dough coming from -	
	199. Yeah.
200. the - ice - cream - jar.	
	201. Toward our house.
202. from the ice cream jar to the the house? Okay. (Pause) Good.	
	203. and all the cheese melted.
204. And all - the - cheese - melted.	
	205. And it was so soggy out with snow on it.
206. And it was so soggy out...	
	207. with snow.
208. It certainly has been, hasn't it. It - was - so - soggy - out - with - snow - on. Wait a minute. Is that what I was supposed to say? And it was so soggy out with snow on it? Yeah? Okay.	
	209. And...(pause)
210. Do you want me to read it so far? A big bad wolf and a man died. And there was play dough in the ice cream jar. And there was more play dough coming from the ice cream jar to the house. And all the cheese melted and it was so soggy out with snow on it. (Pause)	
	211. And there was a typewriter.
212. and what?	
	213. typewriter.
214. And there was a typewriter. And there was a - type - writer.	
	215. And there was a muppet show with all muppets.
216. And - there - was - a muppet - a muppet show? - with - with what?	
	217. That's the end.

	Teacher	Child
218.	And there was a muppet show, and that's the end? Okay, good. The - end. Nice.	

Dramatization of Patsy's story

219.	Now Mrs. McNamee wrote down Patsy's story so I'm going to let Mrs. McNamee direct this.	
220.	Mrs. McNamee: (to Patsy) do you want to be the big bad wolf or the man? You want to be the man. Okay.	
221.	Teacher: We left off with Jason. Jason was the next when we left off.	
222.	Mrs. McNamee: Jason, you're gonna be the big bad wolf, then, okay? Come. Okay.	
223.	A big bad wolf and a man died. Okay. And then there was play dough in the ice cream jar.	(Patsy and Jason lay on the floor)
224.	I'm not sure how we act these parts out. This is more...	
225.	Teacher: Yeah. This is more narrative.	
226.	Mrs. McNamee: There was play dough in the ice cream jar and there was more play dough coming from the ice cream jar to the house. All the cheese melted and it was so soggy out with snow on it. And there was a typewriter and then there was a muppet show. The end.	
227.	Teacher: Very nice. Interesting. Sometimes you can't act out a part. You just have to listen to it.	(laughter)